

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

JAN 12 1987

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace National Historic Landmark  
(1) Wayne-Gordon House/Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace  
and/or common (2) First Girl Scout Headquarters

2. Location

(1) 10 Oglethorpe Avenue  
street & number (2) 330 Drayton Street not for publication

city, town Savannah vicinity of

state GA code county Chatham code

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

(1) Girl Scouts of the United States of America  
name (2) Savannah Girl Scout Council

street & number See continuation sheet

city, town vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Chatham County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Savannah state GA

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Savannah Historic District, NHL (1966) Nomination amended (1984)  
title Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace NHL (1966) has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no  
National Park Service, Washington, D. C.  
date federal state county local

depository for survey records HABS  
Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

city, town state

## 7. Description

### Condition

☐ excellent  
☒ good  
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated  
☐ ruins  
☐ unexposed

### Check one

☐ unaltered  
☒ altered

### Check one

☒ original site  
☐ moved date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Juliette Gordon Low National Historic Landmark consists of two individual properties in Savannah, Georgia: the Wayne-Gordon House/Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace at 10 Oglethorpe Avenue and a structure at 330 Drayton Street commonly known as the First Girl Scout Headquarters which was originally a carriage house and servants' quarters for the Andrew Low House at 329 Abercorn Street. Both properties are located in the Savannah National Historic Landmark District. The boundaries of the landmark itself are discontinuous as the Wayne-Gordon House is situated several blocks away from the First Girl Scout Headquarters.

#### WAYNE-GORDON HOUSE/JULIETTE GORDON LOW BIRTHPLACE, 10 OGLETHORPE AVENUE

This house was the birthplace and childhood home of Juliette Gordon Low. She lived there until she married William Mackay Low in 1886. The house was built between 1818 and 1821 for James Moore Wayne, a prominent Savannah jurist and politician who served as Mayor of Savannah, United States Congressman, and United States Supreme Court Justice. Moore sold the house in 1831 to his niece and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. William Washington Gordon I, Mrs. Low's grandparents, and the property remained in the Gordon family until 1953 when the Girl Scouts of the United States of America purchased and restored it. The house was opened to the public in 1956. Interpretation of the site emphasizes Juliette Gordon Low's life, the history of the Gordon family, and the history of Girl Scouting. The property is officially known as the Juliette Gordon Low Girl Scout National Center and is visited annually by thousands of Girl Scouts who participate in a variety of educational programs.

When originally constructed, the Wayne-Gordon House was two stories on a raised basement and was built of brick stuccoed to resemble stone. Other features included a five-bay front, central entry, a one-story Doric entry-porch with steps on either side, second floor windows set in blind arches, and two semicircular bays on the rear. Kitchen and service areas occupied the basement. On the first floor were double parlors, a drawing room, and a dining room with a curved stairway at the end of the central hall leading to the second floor with four bedrooms, dressing rooms, and trunk room. Important interior features included plaster cornices and ceiling medallions and marble mantles. The design of the Wayne-Gordon House has traditionally been attributed to British Architect William Jay, but there is no substantive documentation to this effect.

Mrs. Low's parents, Mr. and Mrs. William Washington Gordon, II, renovated the house in 1886 according to plans executed by New York architect, Detlef Lienau. The work included the addition of a third floor and the construction of a one-story, curved piazza on the east side of the house. The new top floor had a hipped roof, bracketed cornice, and quoins around windows and at corners and contained five bedrooms and two bathrooms. Two bathrooms were installed on the second floor, and a kitchen was inserted into the first floor in conjunction with the construction of the new east porch.

During World War II, the Wayne-Gordon House was converted to apartments. These changes were removed during the initial restoration of the property by the Girl Scouts in 1953-56. Subsequent work on the house has generally been restorative in nature as well. The present condition of the Wayne-Gordon House is good with a high degree of retention of historic fabric and features from both the period of initial construction and the 1886 renovation.



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OWNER OF PROPERTY

Item number 4

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- (1) Wayne-Gordon House/Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace

Girl Scouts of the United States of America  
c/o The Juliette Gordon Low Girl Scout National Center  
142 Bull Street  
Savannah, Georgia 31401

- (2) First Girl Scout Headquarters (Low Carriage House and Servants' Quarters)

Savannah Girl Scout Council  
428 Bull Street  
P. O. Box 9389  
Savannah, Georgia 31412

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The rear yard and side garden of the Wayne-Gordon House have always been enclosed by service buildings and high walls. However, buildings at the rear of the lot were remodeled extensively for contemporary purposes such as a gift shop, offices, and meeting rooms. These buildings lack historic integrity and consequently do not contribute to the property's significance. Their renovation has been carefully executed, however, and these structures do not detract from the historic setting of the house itself. The ornamental garden on the east side of the house has been partially restored with historic plant materials known to have been cultivated by the Gordons in the nineteenth century. The planting pattern is not original, however.

FIRST GIRL SCOUT HEADQUARTERS, 330 DRAYTON STREET

This building served originally as a carriage house and servants' quarters for the Andrew Low House, Mrs. Low's adult residence in Savannah.<sup>1</sup> It is situated behind the garden in the rear of the Andrew Low House and was likely built at the same time as the Low House in 1849. In 1912, Mrs. Low had it remodeled as a meeting place for local Girl Scout Troops. When Mrs. Low died in 1927, she bequeathed this building to the Savannah Area Girl Scout Council. It was in continuous use by this organization until 1986. It is currently leased to the Junior League of Savannah.

Built of brick covered with stucco, the building has a central block that is two stories in height with simple stucco pilasters supporting a stucco band at the cornice line. Flanking one story wings link the structure to the garden walls of the Andrew Low House. A shallow-pitched pyramidal roof has wide eaves with simply detailed brackets. Second story windows have double-hung sash in a six-over-six configuration. Ground floor window sash have a two-over-two configuration.

The basic form of the building has not changed since Mrs. Low's death in 1927, although one of the two doors in the main block has been replaced by a window, and the carriage doors which opened on to Drayton Street from the wings on either side of the main block have been removed and the openings filled in. The interior has been considerably altered, and all features from the period in which the building was used as a carriage house and servants' quarters and the early twentieth century modifications made by Mrs. Low when she converted the building for use by the Girl Scouts have either been removed or are obscured by modern materials and features. The building is in a good state of repair.



## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1860–1927 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

In Savannah, Georgia, on March 12, 1912, Mrs. Juliette Gordon Low (1860–1927) formed the first Girl Scout Troop in the United States. Over the next quarter of a century, Mrs. Low oversaw the development of the Girl Scout movement (initially called Girl Guides) as it grew from its local origins with 18 members to a national organization with over 168,000 members at the time of her death. In establishing the Girl Scouts in the United States, Mrs. Low was strongly influenced by General Sir Robert Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides in England in 1908 and 1910, respectively. Two historic properties in Savannah are considered to be nationally significant due to their close association with Mrs. Low and her role as founder and initial leader of the Girl Scouts in the United States. These properties are Mrs. Low's birthplace and childhood home at 142 Bull Street (the Wayne-Gordon House) and the first Girl Scout Headquarters at 330 Drayton Street, originally the servants' quarters and carriage house for Mrs. Low's adult residence at 329 Abercorn Street (the Andrew Low House).

Juliette Magill Kinzie Gordon (nicknamed Daisey) was born into a prominent Savannah family on October 31, 1860, and her childhood was spent in the house now known as the Wayne-Gordon House. Her father, William Washington Gordon, II, (1834–1912), attended Yale University, became a cotton broker in Savannah and served as a captain in the Confederate Army. After the Civil War, he resumed his prosperous career, was elected to the Georgia House of Representatives, and during the Spanish-American War was appointed Brigadier General in the U. S. Army Volunteers. Juliette Gordon's mother, Eleanor Kinzie (1835–1917), came from Chicago where her family had settled and prospered during the period it was changing from a remote army and trading post to a major urban center. She was a talented woman who was fluent in several foreign languages and was the author of a popular book Wau-Bun, based on her family's travels through the midwestern frontier prior to settling in Chicago.

Juliette Gordon enjoyed a privileged upbringing which included extensive domestic and European travel and attendance at boarding and finishing schools in Virginia and New York. She exhibited talent as an artist early on and over the course of her life she developed skills in several mediums including painting, sculpturing, and ornamental iron-working. As a young adult she became almost completely deaf as the result of ear infections. In 1886, she married William Mackay Low, the son of Andrew Low, a socially prominent and wealthy English merchant and business associate of her father. Andrew Low maintained a house in Savannah on Lafayette Square (the Andrew Low House) as part of his business. This house, which William Low inherited from his father along with his fortune, became the couple's American residence.

After 1887, the Lows lived primarily in England and Scotland. They also traveled extensively in Europe. Having married into a prominent and wealthy British family, Mrs. Low became a member of England's most exclusive social circles. William Low, for example, was a close friend of the Prince of Wales, and in 1889, Juliette Low was presented to Queen Victoria at the Court of St. James. The early years of the marriage were apparently quite happy, but by the mid-1890s there were problems, including a series of clandestine

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affairs by William and his growing alcoholism. These problems worsened over the years, and Mrs. Low finally decided to seek a divorce. Before she could initiate formal legal proceedings, however, William Mackay Low died in 1905.

Following her husband's death, Mrs. Low waged a grueling, but ultimately successful court battle for her rightful share of his estate. After 1906, she began spending the winters in the United States, dividing her time between Savannah and travel to other parts of the country. Much of the rest of her time was spent in England where she resumed her extremely active social life. She also continued to travel extensively, not only in American and Europe, but also in more exotic places such as Egypt and India. Sculpturing became her major artistic outlet during this period. In 1911, her interest in this art form led to a chance meeting, and ultimately close friendship, with another amateur sculptor, General Sir Robert Baden-Powell, founder and leader of the Boy Scouts in England. She also met his sister, Agnes, who was in charge of the Girl Guides, a similar organization for girls. From these relationships, Mrs. Low developed the idea for establishing a similar organization for American girls.

At the time Mrs. Low met Baden-Powell, he was an extremely popular public figure in Great Britain. His defense of Mafeking during the Boer War in South Africa had made him a national hero, and the immediate success of the Boy Scouts which he founded in 1908 brought him even greater acclaim. Many of the guiding principles of the English Boy Scout movement were adaptations of Baden-Powell's theories on training and commanding soldiers especially his beliefs about the character-building benefits of conferring responsibility upon individuals and training them in rigorous outdoor skills such as scouting and tracking. Baden-Powell was also influenced by American youth organizations such as Ernest Thomas Seton's "Woodcraft Indians" and Daniel Beard's "Sons of Daniel Boone."<sup>3</sup> Unlike these organizations, however, which tended to glorify the outdoors, Indian lore, and wilderness skills for their own sakes, Baden-Powell's Boy Scouts emphasized the outdoors as a means of building character and the qualities of good citizenship. This was true also of the Boy Scouts of America, founded in 1910 and patterned largely on the English model.<sup>4</sup>

The popularity of the Boy Scouts in Great Britain was so great that there was an almost immediate demand for a similar organization for girls. This need was met in 1910 by the formation of the Girl Guides as part of the overall Boy Scout organization but under the supervision of Baden-Powell's sister, Agnes.<sup>5</sup> Mrs. Low gained firsthand experience with the Girl Guides by forming and working with troops in Scotland and London during the summer and fall of 1911.

Mrs. Low's enthusiasm for the Girl Guides, resulting from her exposure to Baden-Powell and her experiences as a troop leader, were transformed into plans to establish the Girl Guides in the United States early in 1912 during her annual winter voyage to America. Baden-Powell was on the same ship en route to America as part of a world tour on behalf of the Boy Scout movement, and he likely encouraged Mrs. Low in this regard since after reaching the United States he contacted individuals in New York and elsewhere about providing assistance to Mrs. Low for the establishment of the Girl Guides. When Mrs. Low arrived in Savannah, she contacted Miss Nina Anderson Pape, a cousin and principal



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of a local girls' school, and discussed with her the possibility of forming several troops of Girl Guides in Savannah. Miss Pape responded positively and informed Mrs. Low that there was already a group of girls in Savannah who met periodically with a local naturalist, W. J. Hoxie, who instructed them in bird watching, plant identification, and other similar skills. Mrs. Low met informally with these girls in early March at her parents' home (the Wayne-Gordon House) to find out if they would like to become Girl Guides. Their affirmative responses prompted Mrs. Low to take action, and on March 12, 1912, in her own home (the Andrew Low House), she organized the first Girl Guide troop in the United States with eighteen girls. Shortly thereafter, she refurbished the carriage house and servants' quarters (the first Girl Scout Headquarters) behind the Andrew Low House garden for use as a meeting place for the Girl Guides. In addition, a vacant lot across the street was converted into a combination tennis and basketball court to provide outdoor recreation to troop members.

The new organization grew rapidly in Savannah, and within a year, over 60 girls were participating in its activities. Mrs. Low apparently intended to make the organization national in scope from the very beginning, and in 1913 she established a national headquarters in Washington, D. C. That same year, she tried to interest the leaders of the Campfire Girls in joining their organization with the Girl Guides under the name Girl Scouts. The Campfire Girls rejected Mrs. Low's plan, but she retained the name Girl Scouts. The first of several versions of the Girl Scout handbook, How Girls Can Help Their Country, was published in 1913 by Savannah naturalist, W. J. Hoxie. It was an adaptation of the British Girl Guides Handbook by Agnes and Sir Robert Baden-Powell. Initially, Mrs. Low personally bore the administrative costs of the Girl Scouts including the salary of a national secretary. She traveled extensively and accepted numerous speaking engagements on behalf of the Girl Scouts to build a broader base of support for the fledgling organization. She also used her many social contacts to interest influential people in the Girl Scouts. Her efforts paid off, and by 1915 the Girl Scouts were a viable organization with a membership of 5,000. In that year the Girl Scouts were formally incorporated, and the first national Council Meeting was held during which a constitution and bylaws were adopted. Mrs. Low was elected President, an office she held until 1920. In 1916, the national headquarters was relocated to New York City where it has remained.

The World War I era was important for the Girl Scouts. Public awareness of the Girl Scouts increased due to the participation by troops all over the country in such war-related volunteer efforts as the Red Cross and war bond sales campaigns. Membership grew precipitously, and by 1920 there were over 50,000 members nationwide. That year, Mrs. Low stepped down as president and thereafter was known officially as "The Founder." She also gave up most administrative responsibilities but continued to travel extensively in the United States on behalf of the Girl Scouts and to represent the organization at foreign meetings. She was largely responsible in 1926 for bringing to the United States the Fourth International Conference of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts, the first such event held outside of England.

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Mrs. Low died of cancer at her home in Savannah on January 17, 1927. By this time, the organization she had founded with 18 girls had a national membership of over 148,000.

FOOTNOTES, Item Numbers 7 and 8

1. Built in the Greek Revival style in 1847-49 and the American residence of British merchant Andrew Low, the Andrew Low House is a two-story-brick-with-stucco structure over a raised basement. Its design has traditionally been attributed to John Norris of New York. Low's son, William Mackay Low, married Juliette Gordon in 1886, and the house became their residence during their brief stints in America. The property became Mrs. Low's when William Low died in 1905. In this house on March 12, 1912, Mrs. Low held the first Girl Scout meeting in the United States. The National Society of the Colonial Dames in the State of Georgia purchased the property in 1928, a year after Mrs. Low's death. Today, the property continues to be owned by the Colonial Dames and used as the organization's state headquarters.
2. Mrs. Low's parents considered William Mackay Low to be unreliable and did not favor the marriage.
3. Beard's boyhood home in Covington, Kentucky, is a National Historic Landmark as is Seton Village, a complex of structures built for Seton in New Mexico.
4. The Boy Scouts were established in the United States by wealthy Chicago publisher, William D. Boyce. Boy Scout tradition holds that Boyce became interested in scouting after a trip to England during which a Boy Scout rescued him when he was lost in a London fog.
5. Baden-Powell's wife, Olave, assumed leadership of the Girl Guides in 1916.



## 9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acree of nominated property** Both properties combined are less than one acre

**Quadrangle name** Savannah Quadrangle/Georgia-South Carolina **Quadrangle scale** 1:24000

### UTM References

(1) Wayne-Gordon House/Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace (2) First Girl Scout Headquarters

A 

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4	9	0	2	4	0
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3	5	4	8	3	2	0
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### Verbal boundary description and justification

NHL boundary corresponds to the legal boundary descriptions. See continuation sheet for boundary descriptions.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

**name/title** Stuart K. Johnson, Senior Historian

Preservation Services Division

**organization** National Park Service, SERO

**date** December 12, 1986

75 Spring Street, SW

FTS 242-2638 (404)331-2638

**street & number**

**telephone**

**city or town** Atlanta

**state** GA

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☒ national ☐ state ☐ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

**State Historic Preservation Officer signature**

**title**

**date**

**For NPS use only**

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

**Keeper of the National Register**

**date**

6/25/87

**Attest:**

**date**

**Chief of Registration**

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA  
(Verbal Boundary Description)

(1) Wayne-Gordon House/Juliette Gordon Low Birthplace

Deed Book 58Y, page 230, Chatham Count (Georgia) Court House:

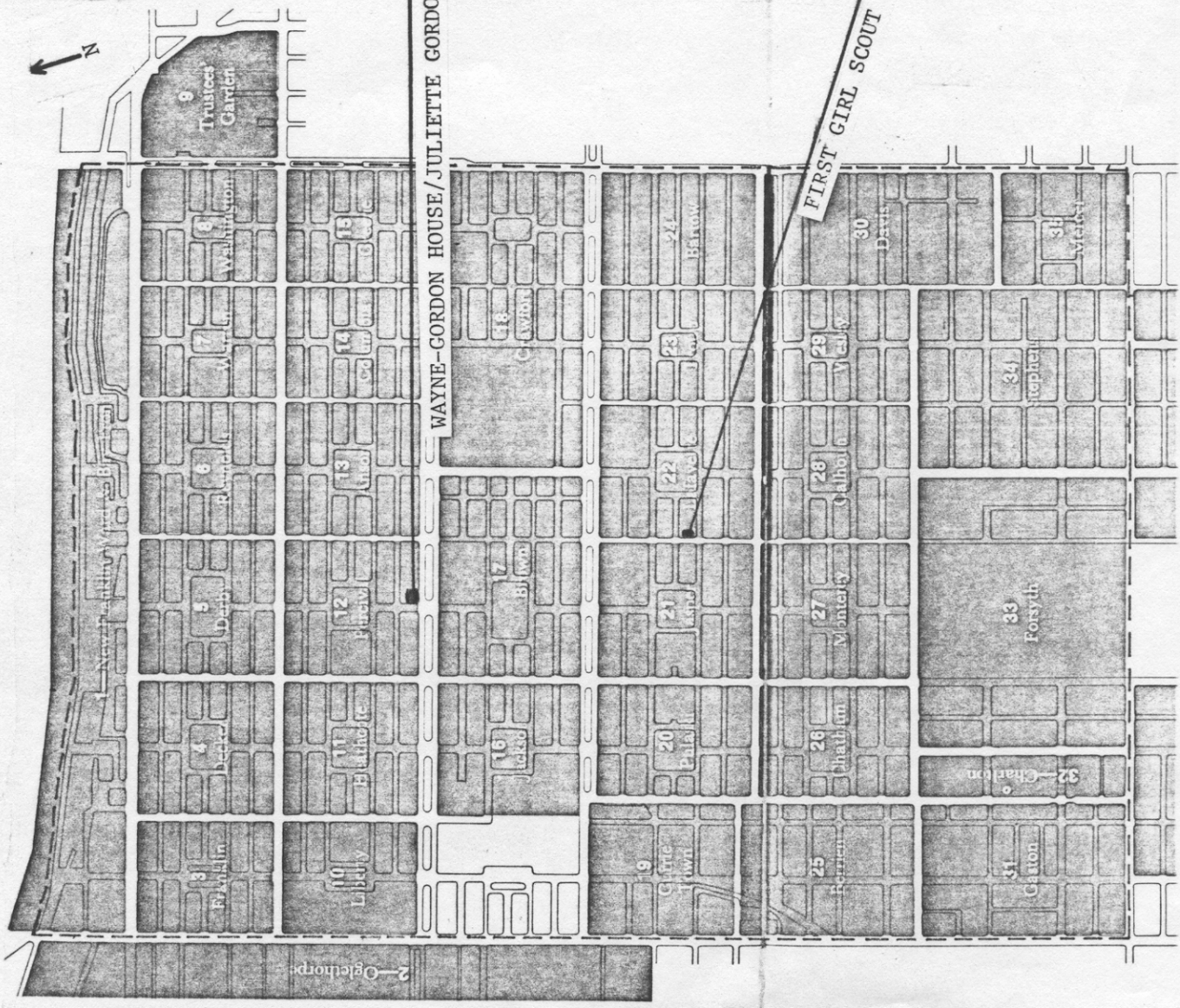
Lots ~~six~~ (6) and ~~seven~~ (7), Sloper Tything, Percival Ward, said lots being contiguous and as a whole being bounded on the north by a lane; on the east by ~~lot~~ lot eight (8), said tything and ward; on the south by Oglethorpe Avenue (formerly South Broad Street); and on the west by Bull Street.

(2) First Girl Scout Headquarters (Low Carriage House and Servants Quarters)

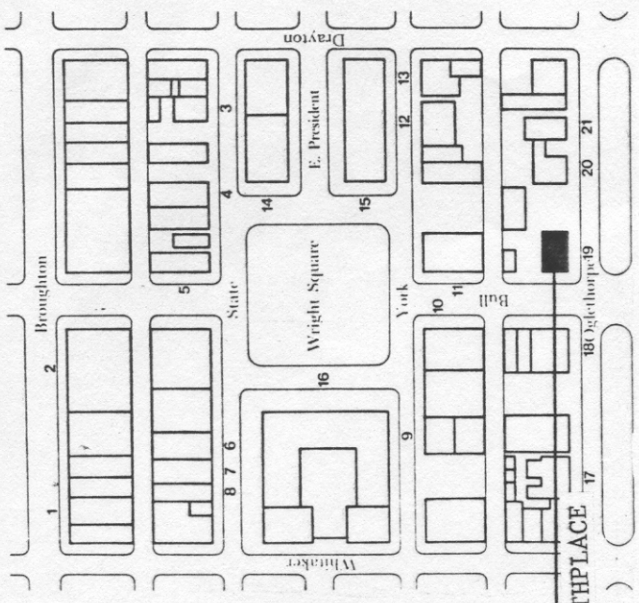
Deed Book 22X, page 392, Chatham County (Georgia) Court House:

SW corner of Lot 14, Lafayette Ward, having frontage of 47.55 feet on Drayton Street and frontage of 37.7 feet on Charlton Street, Savannah, Chatham County, Georgia.

LOCATION MAP  
 JULIETTE GORDON LOW BIRTHPLACE NHL  
 --- SAVANNAH NHL DISTRICT BOUNDARY



PERCIVAL WARD



LAFAYETTE WARD

